

The Pathways Model of Contact Offending

Four different models of online offending (Elliot and Beech, 2009)

- a. Online offending is another manifestation of the same factors that explain contact sexual offending, but in a different context. This approach involves modifying existing models of sexual offending.
- b. Online offending is the result of offense-specific factors associated with problematic Internet use.
- c. Online offending is the result of offense-specific factors associated with sexual addiction or compulsivity.
- d. Online offending is a new form of offending that requires the development of new explanatory models.

The Pathways Model of Contact Sexual Offending

Middleton, Elliott, Mandeville-Norden, and Beech (2006) applied Ward and Siegert's (2002) pathway model to explain contact sex offending online.

Pathway	Description
Intimacy deficits	Factors include insecure attachment and difficulties forming relationships with adults. Offenders are characterized by loneliness, poor social skills, and low self-esteem. Offenders in this pathway sexually preferred adults but may turn to children as substitutes.
Distorted sexual scripts	Factors include early sexualization and possibly sexual abuse. Offenders are characterized by deficits in offense-supportive attitudes and beliefs, misreading of sexual cues, sensitivity to rejection, and low self-esteem. Offenders have distorted sexual scripts, equate sex with intimacy, and may turn to children when feeling rejected or blocked.
Emotional dysregulation	Factors include use of sex as a coping strategy and linking sex with emotional well-being. Offenders are characterized by problems with controlling anger, identifying emotions, impulsivity, and personal distress. They experience sexual arousal in strong emotional states, and this drives opportunistic offending.
Antisocial cognitions	Factors include antisocial attitudes and beliefs and feelings of superiority over children. Offenders are characterized by offense-supportive attitudes and beliefs, patriarchal beliefs, impulsivity, and poor delay of gratification. Offenses can occur when offenders are sexually needy and when the opportunity arises, because the offender disregards social norms about sex with children.
Multiple dysfunctions	Factors include early sexualization, impaired attachment style, and antisocial cognitions. Offenders are characterized by entrenched offense-supportive attitudes and beliefs and sexual preference for children, resulting in approach behaviors.

The largest memberships for both Internet and contact offenders were intimacy deficits and emotional dysregulation. (Middleton, Elliott, Mandeville-Norden, and Beech, 2006)

Surjadi, Bullens, van Horn, and Bogarerts (2010) looked at the self-reported motivations for Internet offenders. The offenders completed an Internet function questionnaire. The highest rating was for avoidant function (avoiding real-life problems), followed by sexual motivations (pedophilia or other). Approximately a third of the offenders claim they never masturbated to child pornography, whereas the others acknowledge they did masturbate to this content.